

E2 4174

Document No. 2007-1

Extracts from Vol. 1 Cong. 78 - 1
The United States.

Report of proceedings, Hearing held before Joint
Committee of the Pearl Harbour Attack S. Con.Res.27
November 23, 1945

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Witness Hull.

Excerpts from Vol. 7, Congress of the United States
Report of Proceedings, Hearing held before
Joint Committee on the Investigation
of the Pearl Harbor Attack. S. Con Res. 27.
November 25, 1945.

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Witness Hull

A. Japan's Record of Aggression

The President and I had to bear in mind and to take into account Japan's past record of aggression and the trend of contemporary developments in the Far East.

Almost from the outset of Japan's emergence as a modern state she had been pursuing a policy of military aggrandizement. For the most part, except during certain brief periods when forces of moderation appeared to be in the ascendancy, the intervals between one aggressive step and the next were but periods of consolidation.

In 1895, following Japan's successful war against China, Japan annexed Formosa and tried unsuccessfully to establish a foothold in Manchuria.

In 1905, after the Russo-Japanese war, Japan established herself securely in Manchuria by acquiring a lease of the Kwantung territory and ownership of the South Manchuria Railway. At that time Japan also acquired southern Sakhalin.

In 1910 Japan annexed Korea after years of encroachment by pressure and intrigue.

In 1915 Japan took advantage of the preoccupation of her European allies with the war against Germany to present to China the notorious Twenty-one Demands.

At the end of the first world war Japan participated in the Washington Conference of 1921-22 and became a party to the treaties concluded there. Among those treaties was the Nine Power Treaty relating to principles and policies concerning China. That treaty envisaged the creation of conditions designed to provide the fullest and most unembarrassed opportunity to China to develop and maintain for herself an effective and stable government. Japan pledged herself to the policies of self-restraint toward China which the Nine Power Treaty rested.

In 1928, however, following the advent of the cabinet of General Tanaka in 1927, Japan adopted a so-called "positive" policy toward China under which it manifested an increasing disposition to intervene in China's internal affairs.

In 1931 Japan invaded Manchuria and subsequently established there a puppet regime under the name of "Manchukuo". By that action, which was a flagrant violation of the Nine Power Treaty, Japan broke completely away from the policy of cooperation agreed upon in the Washington Conference Treaties.

-- I recalled how early in 1934 I welcomed an approach by the Japanese Government in the form of a note (February 21, 1934) by Mr. Hirota, the Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs, in which he stated that he firmly believed that no question existed between the United States and Japan "that is fundamentally incapable of amicable solution". In my reply (March 3, 1934) I concurred in that view and emphasized our Government's belief in adjustments of questions by pacific processes.

Only a short time after that exchange of notes, however, Japan again unmasked the basic purpose of aggression consistently adhered to by powerful policy-making elements in Japan. On April 17, 1934 the Japanese Foreign Office spokesman gave out a truculent official statement known as the "hands off China" statement. In that statement Japan made clear a purpose to compel China to follow Japan's dictate and to permit other countries to have relations with China only as Japan allowed. *****

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B. Japan's Record of Duplicity:

The President and I also gave thought to the fact that Japan had a long record of duplicity in international dealings. This duplicity was due largely to the fact that the Japanese military were a law unto themselves and consistently overrode commitments which civilian Japanese had given.

In 1904, Japan guaranteed Korea's independence and territorial integrity. In 1910, Japan annexed Korea.

In 1908, Japan pledged with the United States to support the independence and integrity of China and the principle of equal opportunity there. In 1915, Japan presented to China the notorious "twenty-one demands".

In 1918, Japan entered into an inter-allied arrangement whereby forces, not exceeding above 7,000 by any one power, were to be sent to Siberia to guard military stores which might be subsequently needed by Russian forces, to help the Russians in the organization of their own self-defense, and to aid the evacuating Czechoslovakian forces in Siberia. The Japanese military saw in this enterprise an opportunity, in which they were eventually unsuccessful, to annex eastern Siberia and sent more than 70,000 troops.

In the Nine Power Treaty of 1922, Japan agreed to respect China's sovereignty, independence, and territorial and administrative integrity. Japan also agreed to use its influence to establish the principle of equal opportunity there. Japan's whole course in China since 1931 of military occupation and economic domination was in violation of those pledges.

On November 21, 1932, Mr. Matsukawa, then Japanese delegate to the League of Nations, said: "We want no more territory." By the end of 1932 Japanese forces had occupied the whole of Manchuria and in subsequent years they moved southward and westward occupying a vast area of China.

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C. Divergence between Japanese
and American Policies:

The President and I had very much in mind the fact that the United States and Japan had widely different concepts and policies. We went over the successive steps our Government had taken to influence Japan to adopt peaceful policies.

We recalled that Japan's action in 1931 in embarking on a course of aggression (and) expansion by force and of disregard of treaties had ushered in an ever widening conflict between forces of aggression and those desirous of maintaining peace. Our Government's opposition to Japan's course in Manchuria was set forth in a communication addressed by the then Secretary of State, Mr. Stimson, to the Japanese Government on January 7, 1932, and in a further communication of February 25, 1935, to the Secretary General of the League of Nations.